

SAVE THE PARISH - DRAFT EMAIL OR LETTER TO YOUR MP

[WRITING TO THOSE IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS IS ALSO A GOOD IDEA. PLEASE AMEND AS APPROPRIATE.]

Dear [HERE PLEASE INSERT MP'S OR PEER'S NAME],

Request to support the work on parishes by Chris Loder MP

I write to emphasise the importance of the parish church in our community here in _____ where I am a parishioner. [HERE, PLEASE ADD EVIDENCE WHY THIS IS SO, IF YOU HAVE ANY, AND ANY FORMAL ROLE YOU OCCUPY IN THE CHURCH, IF YOU HAVE ONE. EVERYONE, OF ANY FAITH OR NONE, IS A PARISHIONER.]

The Church of England's governing body, the General Synod, has the power to pass Measures (ecclesiastical Acts of Parliament) only because it is a delegated legislature – i.e., this power has been conferred on it (and can be revoked) by Parliament. Parliament is the ultimate authority over the Established Church and is custodian of the assets which it manages. This explains the key significance of our elected Members of Parliament in relation to the management of the CofE. It is for this reason that I am writing to ask you to get involved in the affairs of the CofE on behalf of your constituents. [IF THE ADDRESSEE IS A PEER, PLEASE AMEND 'YOUR CONSTITUENTS' TO 'THE PEOPLE'.]

The dioceses are increasingly being presented as the basic unit of the Church, although this is not legally the case and the clergy's ordination vows are framed in terms of being the Good Shepherd. The basic unit remains the parish, where the flock lives. The vast majority of the CofE's annual income comes in the form of voluntary donations from the parishes (the rest is income from the £9+bn portfolio managed by the Church Commissioners, i.e. the historic assets and gifts of past generations).

The diocesan bureaucracies are not income-generating, but wholly dependent upon the income they receive from the voluntary contributions of the parishes. Their overspending is crushing the parishes. However, they are not practically accountable to the parishes for their expenditure. Neither are the Bishops accountable, being selected for appointment rather than elected. Even the Archbishop of Canterbury is only 'primus inter pares' (first among equals) and there is no power to sack a bishop except in the most extreme circumstances.

The parish assets of the CofE are coming under threat, because of the costly and top-heavy nature of the CofE's management. There is an increasing tendency to centralise, and for a diocese to treat parish assets as its own, especially during an interregnum (period without a vicar). The parishes should not be at risk of losing their vicars, their parsonages, their assets, their independence or their church buildings. The 1,000-year-old parish system, and the rights of the people, who 'are' the CofE, should be preserved.

[HERE PLEASE ADD DETAILS OF ANY SPECIFIC CONCERNS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING TO YOUR OWN CHURCH OR PARISH, ITS CLERGY AND ITS ASSETS]

May I please request you to raise the 'Save The Parish' campaign with Chris Loder MP and to support his work on this? The people need the protection of a powerful caucus of MPs and Peers who will represent their interests.

[Sign off and contact details]